

Vexatious Herbology Lessons

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Summary: Draco doesn't much like spending his afternoons in double herbology class, even if it is just once a week. So, it doesn't surprise him when he suffers an exceptionally annoying lesson enduring the abuse of one little plant.

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>Disclaimer: I don't own anything that has to with Harry Potter or the lovely world that was created by the amazing J.K. Rowling.

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><p>Vexatious Herbology Lessons

Fat drops of rain began plopping onto the thin panes of greenhouse glass from the cloud-darkened afternoon sky. The rhythmic sound of the droplets splattering directly above Draco's head made it hard to make out Professor Sprout's lecture on the flowering plant standing before her. He wasn't really worried about not being able to hear

what the dumpy little witch was saying, though. If the lesson were going to involve something dangerous, she would have said something about it when they first arrived. Instead, she'd greeted them with an overly cheerful smile and told them to choose a workstation for the duration of the double herbology lesson.

Draco had chosen to work at a table in the back of the greenhouse, closest to the door and furthest away from the professor's watchful eyes. He wasn't keen on being forced to endure the chilly midday lesson, especially now that the long autumn days were growing colder as winter drew nearer. It was even harder for Draco to suffer through Sprout constantly favouring the abhorrent Gryffindors they shared the lesson with. The reminder of the Gryffindors' presence made a sour expression darken Draco's face. He couldn't stand the lot of them. Saint Potter seemed to always win over the professors that thought he could do no wrong, though his very existence was proof enough that he could. Then there was that red-headed idiot Weaslby who went through most of his lessons wearing a look of total confusion on his detestable, freckled face. Oh, and one could not forget that muggle-born Granger. She was possibly the worst of them all, the unbearable little know-it-all. She took pleasure in spouting off all the correct answers to any professor that would listen, making the rest of the class look like insipid idiots. He was filled with a sudden loathing that permeated from his very being at just the thought of the golden-trio, and his mercury gaze flicked across the room to seek them out.

Potter and Weasley were sitting at a table together beside Lumpy Longbottom. The boy-who-should-have-died was paying attention to something Professor Sprout was pointing out on a thin shrub sitting before her on the table. The ginger imbecile beside him was slumped over with his head resting in his hand. He wore his patented look of confusion, as if he didn't understand the words coming out of the professor's mouth. _That's just typical,_ Draco speculated with a sneer. His silver eyes slid over the table beside the two boys, expecting to see Granger poised eagerly beside them, but instead found that it was occupied by dimwitted Lavender Brown and her quiet friend Patil. He sat up a little straighter and began scanning the room with penetrating eyes, trying to see if Granger was among the rest of the students. Draco didn't see her anywhere. _That's odd,_ he thought slowly. _Granger never misses a lesson._

Professor Sprout's lecture droned on for another half hour before the door of the greenhouse burst open with a sudden gush of icy autumn wind, accompanied by a spray of stinging rain. Hermione Granger walked through the door as quickly as she could, and pulled it firmly closed behind her. Her robes hung around her in a drenched mess of cloth from the trek to the greenhouse from the castle. Beads of water were streaking down her flushed cheeks to drip from her chin. Draco watched Hermione pull her wand out of her bag, point it at herself, and cast a charm that tidied up her dishevelled, dampened appearance. She slipped the wand back into her bag before walking, red-faced, to where Professor Sprout was waiting with a scowl on her round face. After a few moments of Hermione mumbling something, the Gryffindor girl's face grew a darker shade of red, and she turned to walk slowly toward her friends. Only, she didn't try to take a seat where Potter and Weasley were sitting. Instead she kept walking around the class.

With disbelieving eyes, Draco watched her progression until she was

standing beside him with her jaw stubbornly set. She pulled the chair out slowly, and then sat down on the edge of the seat furthest from him. Her umber eyes darted toward him momentarily, but they flicked away when they met his. Draco could tell that sitting beside him was the last thing she wanted to do. If he wasn't so startled by her sitting beside him, he might have smirked at her discomfort. Instead, he glowered at her while she sat rigidly trying to ignore his existence.

Great, that's exactly what I wanted, Draco sulked. It wasn't like he needed to spend the whole afternoon in her company to be miserable. But having the talking brain prattling on beside him was definitely not going to improve his day. He gave a heavy sigh. If he could just ignore her, perhaps the rest of the lesson would go by without much of an incident. With that in mind, he turned away from the annoyance beside him and tried to focus on what Professor Sprout was rambling about.

"Now, today we're going to be working with a plant that is from the *Alcea* genus called the Whingingspoot. It is closely related to the *Alcea rosea*, better known as the common Hollyhock, and could easily be mistaken by appearance alone. However, instead of having seeds within the fruit at the centre of each flower like hollyhocks, there is a small disk of rounded pods with seeds inside. We'll be removing the sweet smelling pods from our Whingingspoots today. These pods will be placed in a tray under our synthetic lights over there," the elderly witch said as she indicated a table of hanging lights that had been enchanted to work. "We'll leave them under the lights until they're nice and dry. Then it'll be up to each of you to grind the pods into a fine powder. Does anyone know what that powder is called, or what it is used for?"

Draco's eyes darted to where Hermione sat silently with her hands on top of the table. He watched her eyes brighten with the knowledge that she knew the answers. But, she didn't raise her hand or blurt out the answer like she normally did. Instead, she turned her attention to picking at her cuticles.

Professor Sprout gave a disappointed sigh. "It's called dried spootling. Both potioners and medical practitioners work with this ground up pod because it can be used in an assortment of behavioural enhancing potions. For example, if someone is suffering from depression, these pods can be added to a number of potions that will cheer them right up."

"Professor, why wouldn't someone just use the cheering charm?" A petite red-headed Gryffindor girl, who surprisingly wasn't a Weasley, asked meekly from where she sat beside a slender brunette.

"That's a very good question, Miss Tolipan," Professor Sprout said with a brilliant smile. She was, apparently, thrilled by the fact that someone was showing a bit of interest in the lesson. "A cheering charm will only affect someone for a short period of time. Whereas a potion brewed with dried spootling will last for a much longer duration. If you think about it, brewing a potion that can be stored in large quantities is a much wiser way of dealing with the dreary moods than having to cast a cheering charm every a few minutes. Now, are there any other questions before I explain how to extract the pods from our Whingingspoots?"

When none of the students raised their hands, she continued on. "Alright, now remember that these little plants are very sensitive. They get easily offended if someone approaches them with a negative presence. They're also intelligent enough to interpret the tone you're speaking in, and they can understand most words you say. So, make sure you don't say anything inappropriate. If you offend them, the large colourful blooms will close all the way down the stalk. If that happens, the head flower at the top will start spitting tiny black pebbles at you to show its displeasure. Remember, think positive and be cheerful. Once you've won over your plant, you will be able to open the petals of the beautiful flowers. Inside you'll see small the brown pods at the very centre that I mentioned before. Just take the back of your knives and scrap the pods gently away to place them in the little dishes on your tables."

With a wave of her wand she sent trays of Whingingspoots whooshing around the room until one sat before each student. "Once you've cleared all of the pods out of the blooms, please place the dishes on the table under the light and then you're free to go. Over the weekend, I would like you to write at least an eight inch summary about the the plants we're working with today. Please begin."

Draco stared grudgingly at the plant in front of him. It was thinner than most of the others around the room, and the pale purple blooms weren't quite as large either. As a matter of fact, the stringy plant looked as if it had one foot in the grave. He looked over at Hermione's, and his face grew hard. Hers had a nice thick, bright green stalk with proud bulbous pink flowers. When his gaze jerked up to her face, he saw that she was smirking at the state of his.

"Something funny, Granger?" he snapped the question with narrowed eyes.

She shook her head at him, not meeting his eyes. "I wouldn't dream of saying what I'm thinking aloud. It might offend someone or...something."

"Afraid, are you?" Draco asked with a sly grin. When she didn't respond, he turned his attention back to the flowering plant on his table and frowned. How exactly was he supposed to win over a plant?

From the corner of his eye he could see Hermione reach her hand out to stroke one of the flowers on her Whingingspoot. The heaviest bloom at the top wiggled ever so slightly, as if the touch had tickled. Then Draco heard her say, "Oh, you're such a charming little flower, one of the prettiest I've ever seen."

"Sweet Salazar, Granger!" Draco blurt out with indignation. "It's just a ruddy plant. I don't thinkâ€"

"Malfoy, I should warn you..." Hermione started to say. But it was too late. The pink flower at the top of her plant closed its petals tightly, and then turned towards Draco. Without warning, the flower began spitting tiny pebbles at the pale-haired boy with such ferocity that it took them both by surprise. The next thing Draco knew his face was being pelted by a stinging onslaught of minute-sized stones. He tried to cover his face with his hands to stop the biting pain, but not before one of the rocks struck him right in the eye.

Draco cursed as he turned away and clapped a hand over his aching eye. The plant continued to shoot pebbles at the back of his head, showing no signs of stopping, until his anger got the best of him. With more force than he intended he snapped, "Make it stop, Granger!"

"I can't," she protested with a hint alarm. "If you want it to stop, you'll have to apologize."

"You want me to say sorry to a stupid plant?" He tossed an angry look over his shoulder. Surely she was just trying to make him look like a fool in front of everyone else. "I don't think so."

"Then it's not going to stop. You've offended it. If you don't believe me, just ask Professor Sprout." She sat with her arms crossed over her chest as she spoke.

He had forgotten about Professor Sprout, who was at the front of the class helping Longbottom with something. Clearing his throat, he called out, "Professor! Granger's plant is attacking me! Get her to make it stop!"

Sprout patted Neville on the shoulder before turning to hurry toward them with a worried expression. "What have you done, Mister Malfoy?"

"I don't know what—" Draco began. But he was immediately cut off by Hermione.

"He insulted my Whangingspoot, Professor."

"Oh, Mister Malfoy, didn't I advise you against offending them? Now you'll have to apologize and hope it forgives you. If it doesn't, you'll just have to leave. Quite frankly, it would be more of a disturbance having you here. Even with a shielding spell, it would continue its assault on you." Professor Sprout clasped her hands in front of her. She gave him a stern look and waited for him to do as he was told.

Scowling, he turned back to the plant and muttered, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to _offend_ you._."

For a second, it seemed as if it had worked because the plant stopped its barrage on him. It seemed to consider his words for a few long minutes. But then it shook viciously and began spitting pebbles once more. Draco growled his frustration, grabbing his book bag to shield himself with. He sent a look at the professor who said, "Mister Malfoy, you'll need to make a _sincere_ apology."

He rolled his eyes, hoping that the plant could actually _see_ the action. "I'm very sorry for offending you. It was...careless of me to say that you were a ruddy plant. I apologize for upsetting you."

Though the apology was sincere enough, the Whangingspoot seemed to hold a grudge against him. It sent an endless bombardment of pebbles at him until Professor Sprout announced, "You'd better leave, Mister Malfoy. But don't be too pleased with yourself for getting out of class early. You've lost Slytherin house twenty points for not

listening to my instructions."

"But Professor," Draco exclaimed with outrage. "It wasn't myâ€" "

"Wasn't your fault?" the plump witch interrupted with a lifted brow. "That's utter poppycock. No, I suggest you leave before I decide to take more points away from you."

Draco glowered at her for a moment. Professor Sprout was always such a kindly old witch. It seemed strange that she would get so angry about something he hadn't meant to happen. He slung his book bag over his shoulder, nodded his head, and then turned to leave the greenhouse. Before stepping into the rain that was falling in great sheets from the threatening sky, he looked over his shoulder.

The other Slytherins were giving him resentful sneers for having lost them so many house points. Meanwhile, most of the Gryffindors were laughing at his retreating back. As he thought, both Potter and Weasley were getting a good laugh out of his predicament. He'd been viciously attacked by a plant, been forced to apologize to the stupid thing, had twenty points taken from his house, and been kicked out of class after being scolded by one of the nicest professors they had. Of course the annoying tossers would find it funny. His gaze swept over Hermione expecting to find the same sort of mirth in her expression. Though Draco was surprised to see that she looked guilty. Her gaze seemed to say that she was sorry for what happened, though it hadn't been her fault, and that she didn't find it funny that he'd been kicked out of class after having points taken away.

The look confused him, and he stood staring at her longer than he meant too. Colour stained her cheeks as his gaze lingered on her face, starting off a faint pink and then turning a rosy red. Draco didn't know why but the reaction made him want to smile despite the awful afternoon he'd been having. The corner of his mouth twitched ever so slightly. _She was a Mudblood_;_ what was wrong with him? _He couldn't answer that question, and he definitely didn't want anyone seeing the smile that was threatening to split his face. Turning away from the laughter, the annoying jeers, and the unhappy looks his fellow Slytherins were giving him, Draco shoved his away out of the greenhouse door and began the long trudge up to the castle.

End
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